



Now is the Time to Invest in the Gulf Coast

Issue:

Urge Congress, the Administration, and the corporations involved to dedicate 80% of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill fine to Gulf Coast states for restoration—and demonstrate the bipartisan public spirit voters have begun to demand.

Current Status

- Under the Clean Water Act, BP and the other parties liable for the Deepwater Horizon disaster may pay a minimum of \$5 billion in fines — or up to \$21 billion if they are found grossly negligent.
- Fine money goes into the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund to help clean up the next disaster, until the fund cap of \$2.7 billion is reached.
- Surplus dollars may go into the U.S. Treasury to be used for any purpose Congress chooses.
- It is both fair and reasonable to devote 80% of those one-time, non-recurring dollars—that do not come from taxpayers—to a Gulf Coast Restoration Fund.

Pending Legislation

- Two bills have been introduced, with bipartisan sponsorship, to accomplish this goal.
- The Senate bill has been reported out of the Environment and Public Works Committee with a heavily favorable majority
- The House bill is assigned to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and Science, Space, and Technology.

**PLEASE INFORM MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE AND SENATE OF
YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE RESTORE THE GULF COAST STATES ACT OF 2011
(S. 1400 AND H.R. 3096)**

Background

In the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on April 20, 2010, 11 men were killed and more than 650 miles of Gulf coastal habitats—salt marsh, mudflat, mangroves, and sand beaches—were oiled. More than 130 miles have been designated as “moderately to heavily oiled.” The economic and environmental damage to the five Gulf States was significant, as well as the harm to the waters of the Gulf itself.

Reasons to Act

Invest now – or pay more later.

The damages from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita were a staggering \$150 billion in 2005 dollars — more than twice the damages from Hurricane Andrew, 9/11, and the Northridge Earthquake combined. The federal government has spent more than \$125 billion on recovery to date.

Estimates of the cost of Gulf restoration, including but not limited to the Mississippi Delta, vary widely. According to testimony before the Oil Spill Commission, full restoration of the Gulf will require \$15 billion to \$20 billion—a minimum of \$500 million annually for 30 years.

The Deepwater Horizon disaster provides a significant opportunity to begin funding restoration in a timely manner. Its fines can be directed to jumpstart key Gulf restoration projects.

Bipartisan support is strong for allocation of fine money to Gulf Coast restoration.

Among the advocates for 80% of the fines to the Gulf Coast:

- The bipartisan federal Oil Spill Commission, headed by Sen. Bob Graham and Bill Reilly
- The Mabus Commission
- Public polling in the five Gulf Coast states.

The Obama Administration suggests a significant portion of the fines go to a Gulf Coast recovery fund.

More than 131,000 people from every state have signed a “Be the One” e-petition (restorethegulf.com) to demand sustainable funding for restoration of Gulf Coast wetlands, beaches and marshes, showing that national support for coastal restoration is broad and deep.

Gulf Coast environments were stressed before the spill. The goal: To restore the system’s natural resilience.

Essential habitats in coastal bays and estuaries have been lost to or degraded by pollution, energy or other development, changes in freshwater inflows, and overfishing. Restoring natural systems—as opposed to specific historical features or land forms—to health would bring resilience back into this vital economic and ecological region.

A comprehensive response requires a national vision for restoring Gulf ecosystems to health.

Ecosystem restoration is ongoing in several areas of the country that have received significant federal funding. Compare during the most recent 12-year period:

- \$481.4 million – Chesapeake Bay Restoration (64,000 square miles)
- \$1 billion-plus – Great Lakes Restoration (201,000 square miles)
- \$86.3 million – Gulf of Mexico (596,000 square miles)

Restoring the Gulf Coast wetlands can also be a model for best practices to bring back threatened marshlands and barrier islands worldwide.

Restoring the Gulf Coast is not a partisan issue. It is a leadership issue.